

100
//

A ^{694.9.23.}
//

SERMON

Preach'd to the
SOCIETIES
FOR
Reformation of Manners.

At the Parish-Church of St. *Lawrence-Jury*,
Upon *Monday* December the 31st, 1705.

By the Right Reverend Father in God,
^{K Wake}
WILLIAM Lord Bishop of *Lincoln*.

Aby of Cant.

L O N D O N :

Printed by W. B. for RICHARD SARE, at *Gray's-*
Inn-Gate in *Holborn*, 1706.

40 8 1706

ST. R. MON.

SOCIETIES

Reformation of Manners



By the Right Rev. Lord Bishop of Exeter

LONDON:

Printed by W. B. for RICHARD and ALFRED, Stationers, in Holborn.

2 COR. IV. 18.

While we look not at the Things which are seen, but at the Things which are not seen: For the Things which are seen are Temporal, but the Things which are not seen are Eternal.

THese Words have so necessary a Dependence upon the foregoing *Verses*, that we must first consider the Subject of the One, before we can make any Rational Exposition of the Other. In the beginning of this *Chapter*, the *Apostle* having vindicated the Diligence and Sincerity that had been used both by Himself, and the Other Preachers of the Gospel, in the Discharge of their Ministry; goes on *Vers.* the 7th, to represent to the *Corinthians* how many Difficulties they had met with, and what Dangers they had run, upon the Account of it. *We are troubled* (says He) *on every side, yet not distressed: We are perplexed, yet not in Despair: Persecuted, but not forsaken: Cast down, but not Destroyed: Always bearing about in the Body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the Life also of Jesus might be made manifest in Our Body.*

But tho' such were the Tryals to which the sincere discharge of their Ministry had exposed them,

that it was even a Miracle that they were still alive, and in a condition to go on in the Work of it; yet was not this any matter of Discouragement, much less of Despair, to Them; whilst they knew that they were not only doing the greatest Good that it was possible for them to do to Other Men; but were moreover laying up for Themselves a glorious Reversion of Honour and Happiness in God's Kingdom. On the contrary, the Assurance thereof, joyned with their earnest Desire of attaining unto it, made them proceed by so much the more vigourously in their Course, by how much the nearer they came to the End of it; *For which Cause, continues the Apostle, We faint not: But tho' our Outward Man perish, yet our Inward Man is renewed Day by Day. ----- Whilst we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: For the things which are seen are Temporal, but the things which are not seen are Eternal.*

From which account of these Words, as they thus stand with relation to the Context, it appears that the Import of them must be this: That tho' the first Publishers of the Gospel met with great Opposition, and were forced to run thro' many Dangers, in the Prosecution of their Ministry; yet when they consider'd how much Good they did to Mankind by it, and what a Glorious Reward they were to receive Themselves for it; They were so far from growing weary of their Employ,

or being discouraged in it ; that they went on with Constancy, and even with Chearfulness, to encounter all the Pride and Malice, all the Prejudices and Perverseness of a wicked World: And thought no Labours or Difficulties too great to be undergone by them now, which should intitule them to such an inestimable Blessing to all Eternity.

This is the plain, and literal Meaning, of the *Words* before us ; and will afford Us these Two Practical Observations, for the Subject of the following Discourse :

I. That Those who shall attempt to do any great Good in the World, and make it their business to Correct the Errors, or to Reform the Vices of it ; must expect to meet with much Opposition; and to be exposed oftentimes to the Rage, and Malice, of Ignorant and Wicked Men.

II. That this ought not to be any Discouragement to Them in such their Endeavours ; considering both the great Good they are hereby doing to Mankind at the present ; and the glorious Reward which they Themselves shall be sure to receive for it, at the Last Day.

And 1st, That those who shall attempt to do any great Good in the World, and make it their business to Correct the Errors, or to Reform the Vices of it, must expect to meet with much Opposition, and to be expos'd often-

oftentimes to the Rage and Malice of Ignorant and Wicked Men.

This is indeed a very melancholy Remark; but withal 'tis a Remark, the Truth of which the Experience of all Ages Confirms to Us. Never was there a time in which such Persons were generally so well receiv'd as they ought to have been: Nor, whilst Sin and Ignorance prevail among Men, will there ever be a time in which they must expect so to be.

It would engage me in too large a Subject of Discourse, to look back into the Histories not only of the *Old and New Testament*, but of *Profane Writers*; and from thence particularly shew you what a perverse Entertainment the Holy *Prophets* and *Apostles*, nay, and even the *Philosophers* themselves have met with, in their several Ages and Countries. How little Good they have been able to do with all their Exhortations; and that tho' they have Enforced them with the Express Authority of a *Divine Mission*.

Pet. ii. 5. *Noah* was a Preacher of Righteousness to the Old World. He foretold the Deluge that was to destroy the Earth; and continued a hundred Years together, to exhort Those of His Age to Repent, that they might escape it. Yet neither his *Prophecy*, nor his *Advice*, had the least Influence upon Them; nor could he perswade so much as One single Family to Reform and to Save Themselves.

Gen. xix. *Lot* was in *Sodom*, what *Noah* was in the *World*:
He

He had receiv'd the Ministers of God's Vengeance into his House; and there were but a few Hours remaining, ere the whole City was to be Wonderfully consumed. Yet with all these Advantages, could not that Good Man prevail even with his Own Children to arise and forsake the Place; tho' He assur'd them that if they stay'd, they should perish together with it.

And if we look into the Times that follow'd after; What Tryals, what Afflictions did those Holy Men undergo, whom God in their several Ages rais'd up to Admonish and to Reform his People? Tho' they spake in his Name, and it was not doubted but that they did it by his Authority, yet were they not regarded: But instead of Repenting at their Admonition, they Hardned their Hearts; and not only Rejected the Messages of God, but Persecuted Those who delivered Them.

'Twas a severe Reproach which St. Stephen (who was himself just ready to suffer by their hands upon the same account) cast upon the Jews to this purpose; *Acts vii. 51. Ye stiff necked, and uncircumcised in Hearts, and Ears; Ye do always resist the Holy Ghost: As your Fathers did, so do Ye. Which of the Prophets have not your Fathers Persecuted? ---* But the Author to the Hebrews is more particular, *Ch. xi. 37. Where speaking of the same Holy Men, he tells Us; that They were stoned; were sawn asunder, were tempted; were slain with the Sword: They wandered about in Sheep Skins, and Goat Skins; being destitute, afflicted, tormented.* Such

Such was the Reception which the *Jews* of Old gave to their Prophets ; and to the rest of those Excellent Men, who in their Zeal towards God, and out of a true concern for his Service, would have perswaded them to live more worthy of Both. And if we look into Prophane Histories, the Example of *Socrates* alone, may suffice to shew, that the case of Good Men, and Great Reformers, was not at all better among the *Heathens*, than it was among the *Jews*. With what intolerable Scurrility was He exposed on their very Theatres? What Scandals were raised against him by Impudent and Flagitious Accusers? And when this could not restrain Him, but he resolved still to Go on to reprove and instruct them, and did it with a competent, good Success too; How did they at last accomplish his Death, and put an end to his Correction and his Life together?

I shall not need to tell you what was the Case of the *first Preachers* of the *Gospel*. The very *Chapter* before Us sufficiently proves how troublesome, how dangerous it was. God blessed the Work, and it prosper'd in their hands. But the Men suffered, tho' the Religion Conquer'd; and they saved Others, for the most part at the Expence of their own Lives.

And when in the following Ages *Christianity* it self became Corrupted, so that it stood in need of a Reformation ; It is well known with what violent Opposition that Good Work was encountred; and

and how it cost but little less Blood to Restore the Gospel to its primitive Purity, than it had done to Plant it, at the beginning, in the World.

Such has been the General Averseness of Mankind against all Amendment! And so Unwilling are most Men to be made, either Wiser, or Better! And for the Reasons of it, they may, I conceive, be reduced to these Two.

(1.) The Nature of the Work it self. And,
(2.) The Circumstances of Those who are to be wrought upon by it.

(1.) As for what concerns the Nature of the Work it self; it is not only Difficult, but Ungrateful. It requires great Skill and Prudence in the Management; and can hardly ever be so cautiously and inoffensively carried on, as not to minister some Occasion of Resentment to those who are of all others the most dangerous to be Provoked.

If we consider the former part of it, *The Reformation of Mens Manners*; it is certain that as well as they generally love their Vices, yet there are but few, who have the Confidence to stand up in the Defence of them. Sin is not only a Transgression of the Law of God, but contrary to Mens own Reason. It is as reproachful to Themselves, as it can be scandalous to Others; and upon all these accounts will not admit of any just Apology: Whilst Conscience joyns Verdict with the Reproof, and convinces them that they have deserved that Shame, which therefore they always look upon

the most Charitable Admonitions to bring with them.

Now there is nothing in the World that Men are generally more tender of, than *Reproach*: To be found out in their worst and weakest Part; and not be able to defend themselves in what they have done amiss. And when to this we shall add the Love which they commonly have for their Vices, and that Interest which their Lusts, by a long Indulgence, gain upon their Hearts; what wonder if we see them very hard to be dealt with in a matter that is, upon so many accounts, contrary to their most violent Passions: And averse to those Admonitions which not only tend to deprive them of their Pleasures for the time to come; but do withal reproach their Conduct; and bespeak them to have lived as foolishly, as they have done wickedly in that which is pass'd.

Let us add to this the terrible Apprehensions which such Persons are wont to entertain of the Duty of *Repentance*. What a Difficulty they conceive it will be for them to deny their Lusts, when both Temptation shall assault them; and their own corrupt Desires strive for a Compliance with it. How hard the Exercises of *Confession*, *Mortification*, and the like *Penitential Offices* appear to an habitual Sinner; which yet must be undergone, or he can have no hope of God's Forgiveness. All these not only affright Wicked Men from a Change of Life, but indispose them to the very Desires of it: And render them

them impatient of hearing such Advice as they can neither without Shame, and Terror of Conscience, reject; nor yet without a violent Struggle, and even Convulsion of Mind, have any Thoughts of complying withal.

It is true, as to the other Part of this Work, *The Correcting of Mens Errors*, there may seem not to be altogether so much Difficulty in that. Here our Passions have not so near an Interest; nor are there any such vehement Reluctances in Humane Nature to change a false Opinion, as to Reformat a Wicked Habit. And yet we see how obstinate Men are, oftentimes, on this side also. What a Dishonour they account it to be to them, that another should seem to think himself wiser than they are: And how hardly they will be convinced that they have been mistaken in any Thing.

But especially, if an Opinion be grown Inveterate; If they have been bred up in it, and have all their Lives taken it for granted that they were in the right; What a Surprise is it to them to be told that they have been all this while in the wrong? How hardly do they believe it? And with Difficulty are they brought to consider the Reasons that are offered to convince them of it?

So strong is the Power of Prejudice, that it oftentimes blinds the clearest Judgment; and disposes even those who think themselves the freest from it, rather to acquiesce in an accustomed Error, than to exchange it for a certain, but new Truth.

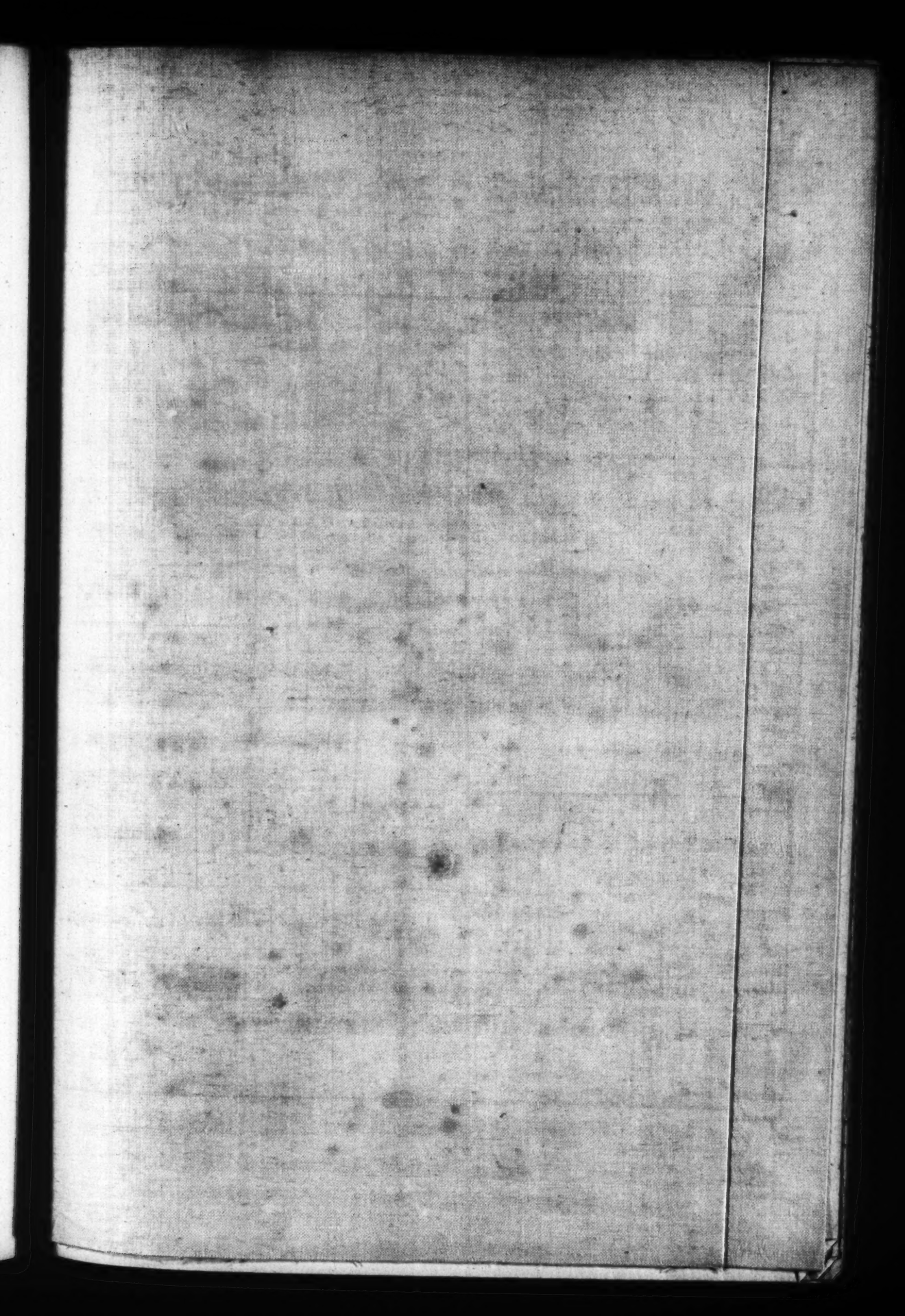
But they are not only Mens Prejudices, that in this case, are to be encounter'd with; tho' that alone were enough to make the Work of Conviction go but slowly on: Their Interests and Affections, their Lusts and their Passions, are frequently concern'd too; and then tho' you should convince them, yet they will not be perswaded.

This was the case of many, upon the first publishing of *Christianity*. The common People were easily satisfied both of the Truth and Authority of it. They saw the Miracles of our Blessed Saviour, and his Apostles; and they weigh'd their Arguments. They had no Interests to blind, no Prejudices to byass them: And therefore they clearly perceived the Force, and submitted to the Reasonableness of what was proposed to them. But the Scribes and Pharisees were in other Circumstances. They had a long time sat in *Moses Chair*; and had gotten the Conduct of the People wholly into their own hands: By this they made their Gain; and for this they were had in Honour and Admiration. And this Honour, and this Gain, they could not endure to part with: And therefore not all the Miracles of Christ, nor all his Reasoning; no, nor all the Prophecies of their own Law, could convince them of his Authority.

Mat. xxiii.
2.

And when about two Hundred Years ago, God raised up some Wise and Good Men to Reform his Church, and to restore the Doctrine and Worship of it, to its ancient Purity, we know with what

Obstinacy



An Account of the OFFERTORY MONEY in the Parish of Books for every Year since I can

CHURCH-WARDENS in the several Years.	1694 Mr. JOHN OUTING, Mr. JOHN PARSONS.	1695 Mr. JOHN PARSONS, Mr. RICH. MARSH.	1696 Mr. RICH. MARSH, Mr. JAMES THATCHER	1697 Mr. JAMES THATCHER Mr. HUMPH. DUDSON.	1698 Mr. HUMPH. DUDSON, Mr. JOHN RILEY.	1699 Mr. JOHN RILEY, Mr. B. TURBERVIL.	1700 Mr. B. TURBERVIL, Mr. HEN. SMITH.
Apprentices bound out yearly, and Charge of Indentures, &c.	18 52 08 00	23 66 05 06	16 48 17 00	28 78 16 00	13 39 02 00	18 52 13 00	14 42 02 06
Charge of Cloathing the Poor each Year.	27 06 00	37 15 10	38 09 09	70 06 03	26 16 06	30 16 06	36 16 06
Paid for Coals for the Poor each Year.	40 00 00	38 00 00	35 10 00	34 04 00	26 19 06	25 15 00	26 03 00
Charge for Poor at the Hospitals, and paid to Chirurgeons and Apothecaries for sick Persons.	12 15 06	23 05 04	40 04 08	50 02 06	22 01 00	39 03 08	38 11 08
Disposed of in each Year by the Church-Wardens and Curates visiting the sick.	44 12 09	46 19 06	35 05 06	45 09 01	35 19 00	36 13 08	26 14 10
Paid the Master for teaching the Offertory Boys.	17 00 00	17 00 00	17 00 00	17 00 00	17 00 00	17 00 00	17 00 00
Paid the Minister for reading the six a Clock Prayers Morning and Evening.				14 00 00	14 00 00	14 00 00	14 00 00
Totals of every Years Charge.	194 02 03	229 05 02	215 06 11	309 17 10	181 18 00	216 01 10	201 08 06

At every Publick Sacrament there is Money constantly given to the Poor Communicants then present by the least Computation it amounts yearly to the Sum of Twenty Pounds, which for these tw

of St. JAMES *Westminster*, as it stands upon our
I came to the Parish.

1700 B. TUR- ERVIL, r. HEN. SMITH.	1701 Mr. HEN. SMITH, Mr. THO. CAUSEY.	1702 Mr. THO. CAUSEY, Mr. JOHN CLARK.	1703 Mr. JOHN CLARK, Mr. JOS. PARSONS.	1704 Mr. JOS. PARSONS, Mr. SAM. HANCOCK.	1705 Mr. SAM. HANCOCK, Mr. JOHN GALE.	1706 Half a Year to Mich 1706 Mr. JOHN GALE. Mr. JOHN KNOWLES.	Gross Totals
14 02 06	16 45 16 00	11 34 06 00	24 71 11 00	16 47 13 00	24 69 13 00	27 74 09 06	723 12 06
16 06	32 10 00	38 00 00	39 18 00	32 00 00	37 08 00		448 03 04
03 00	23 15 00	33 05 00	31 11 00	36 05 00	35 16 00	38 08 06	425 12 00
11 08	33 07 08	36 10 06	27 07 06	23 14 06	21 07 00	05 14 00	374 05 06
14 10	16 04 06	47 16 08	24 19 06	14 02 00	19 05 00	11 10 00	405 12 00
00 00	17 00 00	17 00 00	25 15 00	42 02 01 Building the new School. 154 04 07	48 04 00	31 07 06	454 13 02
00 00	14 00 00	14 00 06	35 00 00	24 00 00	24 15 06	12 00 00	179 15 00
08 06	182 13 02	220 18 02	256 02 00	374 01 02	256 08 06	173 09 06	3011 14 00

nts then present, more or less, as occasion requires, who are generally numerous, and } 250 00 00
for these twelve Years and a half is

The whole 3261 14 00

0[®]

Obstinacy the *Court of Rome*, and the *Clergy* of that *Communion* withstood their Endeavours: And we know how much it was their Interest so to do. In plain Terms, *Purgatory*, and *Masses*, and *Indulgencies*, were too *Profitable*; *Infallibility* and the *Headship* of the *Church* too *Glorious*; *Confession* and *Absolution* too *Politick Errors* to be parted with. The outward Pomp of *Ceremonies* and *Processions*; the Multitude of their *Sacraments*; their *Images* and *Reliques*; their *Exorcisms*, *Unctions*, and the like *Superstitions*, were too *Charming* to the *Eyes*, and *Ears* of the People, to be given up to Reason and Argument: And it held true here, as it ever will do in all other Cases, that where Reason is against Men, there Men will be against Reason, let the Evidence of it be never so clear and convictive.

Indeed could we be so impartial in our Judgments, as to be wholly indifferent to either side of the Conclusion: Were it in matters of *Practice* and *Piety*, as it is in *Mathematical Propositions*; where Truth only is sought, and Reason is left to its free Determination; it would be no hard matter, nor very ungrateful neither, to correct Mens Notions, whatever it were to reform their Manners. But when the one is done with a design to influence the other; and Mens Opinions are corrected in order to the Regulating of their Lives by them; 'tis plain, that in such a case their Lusts and Passions are as much concern'd to defend their Errors, as they are to continue on in their Vices;
and

and therefore they will no more be prevailed with to change the one, than to part with the other.

Such Difficulty is there in the *Nature of the Work* it self, of *Reforming Mens Manners*, and of *Correcting those Nations by which their evil Practices are supported*. Nor is there any less to be expected.

(2.) From the *Condition of those who are to be wrought upon by us*: Who are commonly the worse kind of Men; and for that reason the most difficult to be either perswaded, or reclaimed.

It is one of the ill Effects of Sin, that by long Custom and an habitual Practice, it not only blinds the Understanding, but hardens the Heart too. It corrupts Mens Principles, as well as their Manners; and renders them, by degrees, as incapable of judging what is right, as they are unwilling to be led by it. And when once Men are arrived to such a State, what can be done for them?

This was the Case of the Heathen World heretofore, and is represented by *St. Paul* as the just Judgment of God upon them for their Impieties. *Rom. i. 21, 28. Because when they knew God, they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful, but became vain in their Imaginations, and their foolish Heart was blinded; Therefore God gave them over to a reprobate Mind.* And when we consider the *Obstinacy of many now-a-days*, both in their Errors, and in their Sins: How impatient they are of good Advice; and what an implacable Hatred they conceive against those who give it; we may
justly

justly fear that it proceeds from the same Cause. They have resisted the Grace of God's Holy Spirit when he would have reclaim'd them; and now there is no more space left them, either for Conviction, or for Repentance.

But this is not yet all: For in the Prosecution of such a Reformation we must expect to meet not only with wicked Men, but with a wicked World: Must oppose a Torrent, and stand in the Gap against whole Multitudes who are ready to break in upon us on every side.

Now this will add still more Difficulty to such an Undertaking: Whilst, by the Generality of its Prevalence, Sin gathers not only Strength, but Confidence; and encourages Men even to justify those Crimes when they become generally practis'd, which being taken singly would not have born the least Excuse.

'Tis true, Custom cannot alter the Nature of things; nor the Practice of the whole World make that not to be Evil, which in its own Nature is so. But yet when a Multitude does wickedly, it takes off from the Scandal, tho' it cannot lessen the Guilt: And Sin appears with so much the more Assurance, by how much the greater the Number is of those who commit it.

And this yet more encreases the Trouble, as well as enlarges the Work of drawing Men off from their Sins; and of convincing them of the Heinousness of them. Even good Men are but too

apt to indulge themselves in such Liberties upon this account, as they would otherwise be asham'd of; and to think there can be no great harm in doing that, which they see the Generality of Mankind agree to do. To restrain Men in such cases, seems to look like a Design upon their Liberty: And all a Man commonly gets by the Attempt, is but the invidious Character of a precise, morose Casuist, who would make the way to Heaven more narrow than indeed it is; or, at least, than they can endure to think it should be.

It were an easie matter to illustrate this Remark, in a great many Liberties too commonly taken by some who would be thought none of the worst among us. But that one notorious Instance, of the *English Stage*, is more than enough to confirm the Truth of it. The Profaneness, the Lewdness, the Scurrility of which, tho' it be of it self sufficiently evident; and has of late been fully laid open, beyond all reasonable Contradiction; yet is it still followed not only by the Looser sort, but by many who one would think, should detest such Spectacles: And by withdrawing themselves altogether from it, should add to its Scandal, and leave it (as it deserves) to be a Nest only of unclean Birds; not fit for any, who either desire a good Conscience towards God, or value a fair Reputation among Men, to resort unto.

And thus have I shewn, not only that those who will set themselves to the business of Reform-
ing

ing the World, must expect to meet with great Discouragements in the Prosecution of it; but for what Reasons it is they must do so. That the *Work* it self is of a very ungrateful Nature; such as Men are generally the most averse to: And that the *Persons* on whom it is to be exercised, are such as have not only a more than ordinary Hatred for it; but will be sure to set themselves with all their Interest and Industry to oppose it.

But what therefore must be done in such a case? Must Men be left to themselves, and not be at all contradicted in their Sins? Must we suffer Vice, like an overflowing Torrent, to carry all before it, and do nothing to put a stop to its Career?

No, certainly! Neither the Glory of God, nor the Concern we ought to have for our common Salvation, will allow of such a Remisness. We must stem the Torrent, tho' we were sure we should be swallowed up by it: And be the more firm, and vigorous, in our Endeavours; by how much the more difficult, and dangerous, the undertaking may seem to be. This was *David's* Resolution heretofore, and should be that of every good Man now; *Pf. cxix. 126. It is time to work for the Lord; because they have made void his Law.* Which therefore brings me to the other *Point* I proposed to speak to, *viz.*

II. That all this should be no Discouragement to us in our Endeavours, considering not only the *Great Good* we shall hereby do to Mankind

at the present; but the glorious Reward which we our selves shall be sure to receive for it at the last Day.

I shall say but very little to the former of these Motives, the great Benefit which our Endeavours herein will bring to Others, because it does not fall directly under the Consideration of the Text, tho' otherwise 'tis one of the Arguments made use of to this purpose by St. Paul, at the 12th and 15th Verses of this Chapter, and such as ought to have a very great Weight with us. For, indeed, what can more become any Man, than to render himself a publick Benefactor to those among whom he lives? To expend himself for the advantage of others: And not think any Dangers too great to be run, any Labours too grievous to be undergone, so he may but do some eminent Good to the Publick by them?

This is that Heroick Temper of Mind to which all Men have ever paid a singular Regard. They have thought no Honours too Illustrious, no Acknowledgments too high, for such Services. They have run their Resentments of these things even into Superstition and Idolatry; and worshipp'd those as Gods after their Death, who had devoted themselves to the publick Welfare of their Country whilst they lived.

Now that, in the present Case, there is truly the greatest good done to Mankind by such endeavours; and that whether we consider them as *single Persons,*

sions, or with relation to *Publick Society*, (which nothing can more establish than Piety and Religion) no one who believes the Principles of *Christianity* can possibly doubt. And therefore, were we to look no farther than this one thing; even this alone might suffice both to excite us to it, and to endue us with Firmness and Constancy in the Prosecution of it.

But there is more than this to encourage us in this case: For hereby we shall not only do the *greatest Good to others*, but shall also take the surest Method to *promote our own Felicity*. This is the Consideration to which *St. Paul* refers in the Words of my *Text*; and which I shall therefore at present insist upon, as the great Motive to stir you up to the discharge of that Duty which he design'd to encourage by it. Now the Force of this Argument consists in these Two Suppositions.

(1st,) That by endeavouring to promote the Piety of other Men, we shall effectually secure our own Salvation.

(2^{dly},) That the Assurance hereof ought to stir us up to overlook all Dangers and Discouragements, that may arise to stop us in such our Endeavours. And,

(1st,) That by endeavouring to promote the Piety of other Men, we shall effectually secure our own Salvation.

For, indeed, what is there in the Power of a Man to do, whereby more highly to recommend him-

self to God's Favour and Acceptance? This is truly to direct our Actions to the Glory of God, and the Honour of his Religion. And when to this we shall add, that 'tis to exercise the highest Charity towards our Neighbour too; I know not what can be more desired to shew, that it must be also most pleasing to God, and profitable to the Salvation of that Person who diligently employs himself in it.

Luk. xvii.
30.

'Tis true, it is not possible for us, poor, sinful Creatures, to pretend by any thing we can do, to merit of our Creator. When we shall have done *All that we can, we shall still be but unprofitable Servants*; for we shall still have made a lesser Improvement of the Talents which he has committed to us, than we ought to have done; and than he, in Strictness, might have required of us. But yet by imploying our Time and Abilities to this purpose, we shall the most nearly answer the ends for which we received both: We shall exercise ourselves in the noblest Work that a Rational Creature is capable of fulfilling; and we shall be rewarded accordingly by God for it.

Hence we may observe what extraordinary Promises God has been pleased to make to such as do this. *They that are wise, says Daniel; or rather, they who make others so; shall shine as the Brightness of the Firmament, and they that turn many to Righteousness, as the Stars for ever and ever.* Dan. xii. 3. Brethren, says St. James, Ch. v. 19, 20. *If any of you do err from the Truth, and one convert*

convert him ; let him know that he which converteth the Sinner from the Errour of his way, shall save a Soul from Death, and shall hide a Multitude of Sins.

Nor are we to measure either the Certainty, or Greatness of our Reward, in this case, from the Success of our Labours, but from the Diligence and Sincerity of our Endeavours. If Men will be obstinate against all Conviction; if they will not hearken to us, tho' we lay their Sins never so plainly before their Eyes, this shall not lessen our future Hope; nor should it therefore discourage our present Diligence. We have done what became us, to convince and reform them: Let them look to it if they will not be reclaimed.

Nay more; tho' our Endeavours should meet not only with a Disappointment, but even with a Scorn too: Tho' instead of doing our Brother good, we should only bring some Evil or Danger upon our selves by it; yet whilst we do not by our Folly, or Imprudence, deserve such a return, we shall be so far from coming ever the more short of God's Acceptance, that we shall rather be the more highly rewarded by him for it. This is truly to suffer for Righteousness sake; and will intitle us to the Promise of our Apostle in the Words before the Text, *That our light Afflictions which are but for a Moment, shall work out for us a far more exceeding and eternal Weight of Glory.*

So that howsoever the Case be with us; whether we labour with Success, and God gives us a
plentiful

plentiful Encrease now in this present Time: Or, whether we plow the Sand, and meet with nothing but Dangers and Disappointments; yet still whilst we have this Testimony of our Conscience to support us, that we heartily desire, and (according to our Ability) sincerely endeavour to promote the Honour of God; the Truth of Christianity; and the Practice of Vertue and Piety in the World; we may also be sure that we shall be plentifully rewarded for it; and find, in the end, that *our Labours have not been in vain in the Lord.*

Now this, I say (2dly,) ought to be more than enough to encourage us to go on, against all Dangers and Discouragements that may chance to arise, to stop us in this Work.

For what is it, in effect, but this that we live for? What have we to do in this World, but to be useful to Mankind, and to lay up a Provision for our future Happiness in the next? Let me add yet more; What is there besides this, that is worth our living for? Let sensual, proud, ambitious Sinners, value as they will the Pleasures, the Honours, and Interests of it; yet when all is done, such is the Vanity that occurs in all our present Enjoyments, that I cannot tell (a few particular Friendships, or Relations laid aside) what a Man should wish to tarry one Day in this World for, but to do some Good; or at least, to shew his hearty Desires and Inclinations so to do.

And if this be truly the only substantial Pleasure,
which

which a Man can take in this present State; how much more ought we to be all animated herein, when we shall add to this, the glorious Prospect of that Eternal Reward, which we shall, by this means, secure to our selves in the other World. Where we shall not only be set intirely free from all the Troubles and Dangers we are here continually expos'd to; but shall be filled with the Fruition of such Happiness and Delights, as we are now not able to utter or comprehend.

To shew you, more particularly, how great the Reward of our present pious Endeavours, in the Cause of God and Religion, shall be; and, by Consequence, with what Zeal we should all of us proceed in the Promotion of it; neither will the time permit, nor am I able in any tolerable Measure to do it. It is enough that as we are sufficiently sensible of the Shortness, and Uncertainty of all our present Enjoyments; so are we no less evidently assured that no sooner shall we come to the end of them, but we shall be translated to a most blessed and happy State; where we shall rest in Hope, and be entertain'd with the clearest Prospect, and most earnest Desire of that Great Day, when our Bodies being rais'd out of the Dust, we shall be *carried up by Christ into Heaven; and there remain for ever with the Lord!*

O! The Joy and Ecstasy we shall then be fill'd with, when being deliver'd from all our Sins, and from all those corrupt Desires, and Affections, which

which now incline us to them; and create so much struggle and Contention within us; we shall live in the Presence of God, full of Purity and full of Happiness. When no Passions shall disorder us, no Temptations assault us, no Dangers, no Possibility of any farther Evils shall threaten or disturb us! But we shall be wholly fill'd with the Love of God; and a universal Charity and Affection towards one another! And be instated in the utmost Fruition of that Peace and Comfort, which a perfect Innocence alone can give; and which, till we come to such a State, we cannot sufficiently either express or comprehend.

Who can seriously consider with himself, and firmly believe, that by his present Endeavours he is laying up for himself such a vast Reward, and not resolve to go on and do his Duty, let a wicked World never so much censure or oppress him for it? This is a Reflection that may be more than sufficient to strengthen the most weak; and to animate the most cold, and negligent Christian, into a hearty Zeal for God's Glory, and his Brother's Salvation. And so, doubtless, it would do; would Men set it frequently in their view; and bring it home to their Consciences; and not suffer their present Interests, or Fears, to intercept the Prospect of it. But alas! This is our Misfortune: These things are to be seen only by the Eye of Faith; they are not present to us; and we are guided by Sense, more than by Reason, and seldom consider either what we are, or whither we are going. What

is upon Earth we see, and we enjoy it too; What is in Heaven, we only believe and hope for: And we suffer our selves to be too easily deceived, and led away by the little imperfect Satisfaction we meet with here, from the Promises of those Great and Eternal Blessings, which God has prepared for us in his Kingdom.

This is our Folly; I would to God it were not our Fault too. And the way to correct it, is not to prove that the Happiness of Heaven will be an abundant Recompence for all that we can suffer in our pursuit of it; for that there can be no doubt of; but, if it be possible, to persuade Men to bring these Thoughts often to their Remembrance: *To walk by Faith, and not by Sight: To look not to the things that are seen, but to the things that are not seen.* This would effectually engage them on the pursuit of them; and make them hearty and vigorous in the discharge of their Duty. And they would then feel, and perceive, more sensibly than I am able to represent it, what the Force of the Apostle's Argument in the Text is; *That the things which are seen are Temporal, but the things which are not seen, are Eternal.*

And thus have I done with the two Points I proposed to speak to. I shall make a brief Application of the whole to our own particular concern in it, and so conclude.

And 1st, If there be such just Grounds to fear, both from the Experience of past Ages; and from

the Reason of the thing it self; that those who shall set themselves to the good Work of correcting the Errors, or reforming the Vices of Mankind, must expect to meet with much Opposition, and to run thro' many Difficulties in the doing of it; then should the Consideration hereof engage those who have the Courage to go about it, to prepare their Minds for these Tryals; and not to be discouraged or affrighted, when they shall come upon them.

It is, I confess, a melancholy Consideration, to think how little he who labours the most industriously in the Cause of Piety, must expect to prevail against the Lusts and Passions of Men. That instead of being likely to perswade them to amend their Lives; and to reconcile themselves to God; he shall only run the Hazard of provoking their Malice, and encreasing their Guilt. But however, if this be the Treatment we are to meet with, 'tis good to be prepared for it: And we shall bear it the more easily, the less we are surprized by it.

Nay, but 2^{dly}; By proposing to our selves the Dangers and Discouragements which such a Work may be likely to bring along with it; we shall not only be the better prepared to expect them; but shall moreover be cautioned to act the more wisely and prudently, that so, if it be possible, we may avoid them.

There is hardly any thing in the World more nice and difficult, than to manage good Advice to the best Advantage. To know at what times, and after

after what manner to apply it. How far to go; and where to give off in it. There are few Men so obstinate in their Sins, as not to have their soft Seasons in which they may be treated with about them; and, by a discreet Conduci; be possibly reason'd out of them. And where the Work is in it self so good, and the Success of it, of so great a Consequence to Mens Souls; pity it is, but that it should be carried on with all the Advantages of Charity and Discretion; at least should not be defeated, for want of a reasonable Care and Caution in the Management of it.

To be always reprovng, is the way to make Men avoid our Company; to be sure to be very uneasy in it. There are certain Times in which some things are to be pass'd by, others to be defer'd to a more convenient Season; and very often an occasional Hint will sink deeper into the Minds of some Persons than a formal Reproof.

There is also a Care to be taken in the manner of applying our Advice. Some must be calmly and tenderly dealt with: We must consult their Tempers, as well as correct their Faults, and not aggravate their Sins, which it may be their own Thoughts will suggest to them under a more black and dismal Apprehension, than we would desire they should. Others there are who must be treated with a greater Plainness. They must have the whole Danger and Guilt of their Sins laid freely before their Eyes: And, as St. Jude expresses it, *We must* Jude 23.

save them with Fear, pulling them out of the Fire. But yet even here we must be careful to convince them, that tho' we hate their Vices, we are concerned for their Welfare; and that 'tis our Zeal for that, which makes us so earnest to reprove and correct those.

Mat. x. 16.

1 Cor. ix.

p. 2.

Thus must we joyn *the Wisdom of the Serpent, to the Innocency of the Dove*: And become all things to all Men, that by any means we may gain some. And in observing hereof, we shall not only be likely to do the most Good; but shall take the best course to prevent those Oppositions, which generally lie against such Attempts.

But if after all our Care, we shall still be so unhappy as neither to be able to perswade others, nor even to secure our selves from Injury and Persecution; yet still,

3dly, We must resolve nevertheless to go on in our Endeavours, and look for that Reward of our Work from God, which the Obstinacy and Wickedness of Men deny to us.

Mat. xi.

18, 19.

It is no new thing to see the best Men, and the most worthy Undertakings opposed, and traduced by those who are Enemies to both; and that notwithstanding all their Care and Diligence to prevent it. *John the Baptist* went to work in a way of Roughness and Severity. He came neither eating nor drinking; and the result was, that they said *He had a Devil*. Our Saviour Christ came in the common way of other Men: He eat and drank and

and conversed freely among the People. And of him they said, *Behold a gluttonous Man and a Wine Bibber; a Friend of Publicans and Sinners.*

Thus the *Jews* decry'd these Holy Persons heretofore; and thus others continue to reproach the best Men now. The *Disciple is not above his* Mat. x. 24, 26. *Master; nor the Servant above his Lord. If they have called the Master of the House Belzebub, we ought not to wonder, if they much more call them of his Household so. But Wisdom is justified of her Chil-* Mat. xi. 19. *dren: This was no Hindrance, nor Discouragement to them heretofore, nor should it be any to us now. We must go on, as they did, against all Opposition, and not give over our Endeavours, tho' not only Scandals and Reproaches, but Losses and Persecutions, or even Death it self should threaten us in the pursuit of them.*

This if we do, *we shall not lose our Reward: If we thus endure to the end, we shall be saved.* Nay, we shall not only be saved, but shall be intitled to a greater Degree of Glory in God's Kingdom. Every Sinner whom we convert, shall add both to our Security and to our Exaltation. And we shall be by so much the more honoured by God in the other World, by how much the more we do and suffer in the Discharge of our Duty, and for the Promotion of Vertue and Piety in this.

And now I shall not need to say that in treating of this Subject in general, I have all along had a particular regard to you who have in a more especial

cial manner dedicated your selves to this good Work of REFORMING the MANNERS, and correcting of the Vices of a wicked and scandalous World. Who have formed your selves into SOCIETIES, and fix'd upon the wisest Rules and Methods to make Christianity indeed effectual to the great end of its Institution; the Glory of God, and the Sanctification of Mankind: And whose Labours God has blessed with a plentiful Encrease, to the bettering of the present Age, and to a well-grounded Hope of providing for a general Conversion of that which is to succeed. Insomuch that your Zeal has been influential even to Foreign Countries: Who have not only applauded your Piety, but have follow'd your Example; and begun, in like manner, to promote the Interests of Religion not in Profession, but in Practice; not in the *Outward Form of Godliness*, but in the *Inward Power and Spirit* of it.

To offer you any Arguments to perswade you to go on, and abound more and more in the same Zeal which you have for many Years shewn in this useful Undertaking, would be to injure your Piety, as if it needed to be provoked. No, I am perswaded you have too well consider'd the present Usefulness, and the future Reward of what you have been doing, to want any Exhortation, not *to be weary or faint in your Minds*. I shall therefore instead of insisting upon any such Arguments, end all with my hearty Vows to Almighty God, for his
Blessing

Blessing upon your Endeavours: That he would so strengthen and confirm you in the Prosecution of them, that no Difficulties or Discouragements may ever prevail with you to depart from them.

May your Proceedings be temper'd with an equal Mixture of Zeal and Prudence; of Piety towards God, and of Charity towards those whose Reformation you desire and labour to procure!

May you be the happy Instruments of restoring not only a true Sense and Practice of Religion among Men, but of Peace and Unity to a divided People! Without which, 'tis much to be feared, true Religion will hardly long subsist, much less flourish and encrease.

May Men learn by your Example, your Instructions and Exhortations, to *love God*, and *reverence his Sanctuary*: And so to hold fast to the Communion of the establish'd Church, that there may be neither any Schisms in it, nor Separations from it; but we may all *with one Mind, and one Mouth glorify God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.* Rom. xv. 6.

May Parents, by your Zeal, be excited to take that due Care they ought, to *breed up their Children in the Nurture and Admonition of the Lord!* Ephes. vi. 4. Masters to provide for the Souls, as well as Bodies of their Servants! May the Rich be taught by you to be charitable and condescending to the Poor. The Poor to love and honour the Rich, and to glorify God on their behalf! May our Magistrates be moved by your Example, more carefully to do
their

their Duty, by putting the Laws in a vigorous Execution against all Profaneness and Immorality! In a Word: May we all be perswaded to joyn in one COMMON SOCIETY with you for the same blessed Ends, of correcting first our selves, and then others; *that the Name of God and his Doctrine, may no more be blasphemed among us.*

1 Tim. vi.
1.

This will shew us to be *Thoroughly Reformed* indeed: Not in the unhappy Sense that has sometimes been put upon that Phrase, to the utter overthrowing of all Order and Decency in the Church; but in the true Import of the Expression: To be as pure in our Lives, as we are holy in our Profession; and in both such as becomes the Gospel of Christ. And if we thus glorifie God on Earth, we shall not fail of being glorified by Him in His Kingdom: But from this short State of Probation here, shall be translated to those Eternal Blessings of which our *Apostle* speaks; *Which neither Eye has seen, nor Ear heard, nor does it enter into the Heart of Man to conceive:*

To which, God of his infinite Mercy vouchsafe to bring us all; through the Merits and Intercession of his Blessed Son Jesus Christ our Lord; To whom with the Father and the Holy Ghost, be all Honour and Praise now and for evermore. Amen.

FINIS.



